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General Assembly

Sixty-fifth session

Official Records

116th plenary meeting
Thursday, 28 July 2011, 3 p.m.
New York

President: Mr. Deiss ..... (Switzerland)

In the absence of the President, Mr. Tanin (Afghanistan), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 3.10 p.m.

Agenda item 115 (*continued*)

Follow-up to the outcome of the Millennium Summit

Draft decision (A/65/L.88)

The Acting President: Members will recall that the General Assembly held the debate on agenda item 115 jointly with agenda item 13, "Integrated and coordinated implementation of and follow-up to the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summits in the economic, social and related fields", at the 40th and 41st plenary meetings on 29 October 2010, as well as jointly with agenda items 13 and 120, "Strengthening of the United Nations system", at the 52nd plenary meeting on 23 November 2010.

Members will also recall that, under agenda item 115, the Assembly held a specific meeting focused on development at its 97th and 98th plenary meetings on 14 June 2011.

Members will also recall that, under agenda items 13 and 115, the Assembly adopted resolutions 65/1, 65/7, 65/281 and 65/285 at its 9th, 41st, 100th and 105th plenary meetings, respectively. Also under agenda item 115, the Assembly adopted resolution 65/238 at its 73rd plenary meeting.

The Assembly will now take action on draft decision A/65/L.88, entitled "Participation of civil society representatives in the High-level Meeting of the General Assembly on the Prevention and Control of Non-communicable Diseases, to be convened on 19 and 20 September 2011".

May I take it that the Assembly decides to adopt draft decision A/65/L.88?

Draft decision A/65/L.88 was adopted.

The Acting President: The Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of agenda item 115.

Agenda item 27 (*continued*)

High-level Meeting on Youth

Social development

(b) Social development, including questions relating to the world social situation and to youth, ageing, disabled persons and the family

The Acting President: I call on the representative of Mauritania.

Mr. Ould Cheikh (Mauritania) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I would like to express the condolences of the President, Government and people of Mauritania to the Kingdom of Norway on the terrorist act that claimed dozens of innocent victims. Our Ministry of Foreign Affairs issued a statement of condolence in that regard two days ago.

I would also like to express my gratitude to the General Assembly and its President, our dear friend

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Mr. Joseph Deiss, who is guiding our work very wisely. I would like to express particular appreciation for resolution 65/267 of 15 March 2011, thanks to which we are here in New York to discuss issues related to young people, who are an important part of society and the cornerstone of all successful socio-economic development.

The Government of my country, the Islamic Republic of Mauritania, at the instruction of its President, Mohamed Ould Abdel Aziz, has stated and reaffirmed that the future of any group lies in its youth. It set out a national five-year plan for youth, recreation and sports to be implemented from 2011 to 2015. Our youth policy makes young people a Government priority and will be funded to the tune of more than $230 million, of which $37 million will come from a State fund. That is in line with the election campaign of the President of the Government, who was voted into office two years ago.

Through its national policy on youth, sports and recreation, the Government of Mauritania is determined to combat poverty among young people, who constitute 40 per cent of the Mauritanian population. It intends to integrate them into development and to support youth initiatives in order to improve their situation, which is beset by unemployment and school drop-outs. We seek to build national youth networks that are to be renewed every three years. That is one of the policy goals of my Government. We have also signed and ratified all international youth-related agreements, demonstrating the importance that we accord them, in particular in terms of education, health care and unemployment.

With respect to education, despite the progress made in school enrolment, more remains to be done. We have set up a new Government department of higher education and scientific research, as well as public education institutions, in order to reform education in Mauritania.

Mauritania's young people face many challenges with regard to health care. However, those with special needs will find remedies available thanks to the political will and wide-ranging reforms on which the Ministry of Health has embarked.

With regard to unemployment, we have formed an important ministry tasked with youth employment and promoting the trade sector, which provides 25 per cent of employment opportunities, followed by agriculture at 20.4 per cent, in addition to other sectors, such as services and public administration.

Addressing youth issues involves many challenges and requires the assignment of roles in order to sustain youth development. That has been done by establishing central agencies. Despite our stated wish to look after young people by setting up a ministry for youth affairs and by encouraging them to use such services, many challenges remain.

The Acting President: In accordance with General Assembly resolution 57/29 of 19 November 2002, I now call on the observer for Partners in Population and Development.

Mr. Rao (Partners in Population and Development): I thank you very much, Sir, for giving me this opportunity to make a few comments on behalf of Partners in Population and Development (PPD) at this High-level Meeting on Youth.

At the outset, PPD would like to convey its heartfelt condolences to the Government and people of Norway on their recent tragedy.

As an intergovernmental organization of 25 developing countries, PPD is committed to the promotion of South-South cooperation in the field of population and development by supporting, especially in its member countries, the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals, the goals of the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) and the World Programme of Action for Youth.

The year 2011 will be remembered as the year when the world's population reached 7 billion. According to the latest projections of the United Nations, the world population will continue to increase to 9.3 billion by the year 2050. To put those numbers into perspective, the world population did not reach 1 billion until 1804. It then took 123 years to reach 2 billion in 1927, 33 years to reach 3 billion in 1960, 14 years to reach 4 billion in 1974, 13 years to reach 5 billion in 1987, and 12 years to reach 6 billion by October 1999. Another billion will be added by October 2011. That growth in world population is really phenomenal.

One crucial feature of the current global demographic situation with significant implications for the future is the fact that more than 3 billion people are under the age of 25, with close to 90 per cent of them

living in developing countries. This preponderance of young people, if and when combined with appropriate policies, can become a great source of growth, prosperity and social change in the world. How effectively we will help those cohorts of young people in meeting their educational, employment, developmental, political, health — including reproductive health — needs, as well as how rapidly we will help to empower them, will surely influence the future pace and nature of peace and development in the world.

While sincere efforts have been made by countries in the past to achieve the goals of the ICPD Programme of Action, the Millennium Development Goals and the World Programme of Action for Youth, millions of young people live in poverty and progress towards youth development has been very uneven across the countries of the world. The young are facing many challenges in society, including lack of access to quality education, meaningful employment, proper health care — including reproductive health care — and political participation. They also suffer from violence and setbacks due to climate change. Most severely affected among them are girls and young women, as well as the poor and the disadvantaged. Young women and girls are particularly vulnerable because they are frequently prevented from completing their education and because of their risk of pregnancy, child birth-related complications, forced early marriage, HIV infection and abduction by human traffickers.

As the outcome document (resolution 65/312) makes clear, it is important to give priority attention to addressing those and other challenges that hinder youth development, especially through poverty alleviation and the promotion of sustained economic growth, sustainable development, full and productive employment, and the full participation of youth in the formulation and implementation of policies at all levels. Partners in Population and Development strongly believes that building national capacity to address youth development is most crucial and that the international community should make all efforts to support the less developed countries in that regard.

Based on its record of sharing experiences and innovative practices, as well as of promoting capacity-building through training, research and knowledge-sharing, PPD is convinced that South-South and triangular cooperation have a significant role to play in future national and international efforts aimed at youth development.

In closing, PPD would like to support the implementation of the outcome document by all concerned.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the representative of Peru.

Mr. Gutiérrez (Peru) (*spoke in Spanish*): Peru has a youth population of 7.5 million, representing 28 per cent of the total population. The number of young people has increased in recent years, and today young people are the fastest growing sector of our population. Because of those statistical trends, over the past 10 years the Peruvian Government has developed institutional policies through its national youth secretariat in order to lay down general guidelines to facilitate the holistic development of young people and to ensure their inclusion in society and their active participation as citizens. Over the nine years of its existence, the youth secretariat has achieved some results that I would like to outline.

In 2006, we drew up the National Plan for Youth 2006-2011 in order to create synergy between the State and civil society, offer better and greater opportunities for young people, and establish cross-cutting institutional policies throughout the Government. That has had positive effects, improving the quality of life of many young people. Between 2004 and 2008, poverty among young people was reduced from 43.8 per cent to 31.6 per cent. Also, in the sphere of civic participation, more young people became involved in politics throughout the nation, and today there are 1,665 young people holding elected public office. Still, although the Government's agenda for social inclusion of the young has shown progress, much remains to be done to achieve inclusive development to benefit our young people.

Peru's national efforts have achieved sustained economic growth over the past decade that we are trying to transform into inclusive development, with immediate impact on our youngest citizens. That development should provide them with practical tools enabling them to play an active role in our country's productivity and political system, contributing to our economic growth and the democratic involvement of our citizens. In our view, inclusive development should be based on social investment policies focused on youth. However, such policies should be viewed not as

welfare for a particular group, but as a bonus of economic growth and a way to promote the comprehensive development of a sector of the population that will forge a more integrated and cohesive future for the country. Those policies are an integral part of our medium- and long-term strategies for sustainable and inclusive development.

Like Peru, many countries in Latin America have large youth populations. That demographic reality provides us with one of the best opportunities of recent years to take significant steps forward in sustainable development and in addressing the region's endemic problems of social inequity, provided that we commit to investing in our young people and their education. We are convinced that if we give our young generation access to quality education, a functioning health system and opportunities for productive and dignified work in a democratic system that fosters and guarantees citizen participation, the countries of our region will have the human, social and cultural capital necessary to support sustainable development, improve distribution and promote the creation of wealth.

To conclude, I wish to state that Peru will remain committed to national and international policies on young people, and to express the firm resolve of my country to pursue actions and programmes that allow young people to be fully and progressively involved in our society, in order to achieve the Millennium Development Goals.

The Acting President: We have heard the last speaker on this item.

May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to conclude its consideration of sub-item (b) of agenda item 27?

It was so decided.

Agenda item 162 (*continued*)

Follow-up to the high-level meeting held on 24 September 2010: revitalizing the work of the Conference on Disarmament and taking forward multilateral disarmament negotiations

The Acting President: Members will recall that the Assembly held a debate on agenda item 162 at its 113th plenary meeting on 27 July 2011.

Mr. Tarar (Pakistan): Pakistan aligns itself with the statement made by the representative of Egypt on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM).

Pakistan appreciates the efforts of the Secretary-General to revitalize the work of the Conference on Disarmament and the international disarmament machinery. It is an opportunity for a comprehensive analysis of the problems faced by the disarmament machinery as a whole, which should not be lost in the pursuit of negotiating a particular treaty. Pakistan's position on the Secretary-General's High-level Meeting held last year was circulated as a General Assembly document under the symbol A/65/378.

The challenges faced by the international disarmament agenda and the machinery go beyond the Conference on Disarmament. The components of the contemporary disarmament machinery created by the special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament (SSOD I) are interlinked. The revitalization of those components, including the First Committee and the Disarmament Commission, should therefore be simultaneous and proceed in an integrated and holistic manner.

The purpose and overarching goal of creating the Conference on Disarmament, as mandated by SSOD I, was nuclear disarmament, which is an agenda item that has seen no progress for the past 32 years. Indeed, in 2008, the Secretary-General, in a seminal address articulating his action plan, accorded primacy to nuclear disarmament in his five-point proposal. The first step suggested by the Secretary-General called upon all States, in particular the nuclear-weapon States, to fulfil their obligations under the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons to undertake negotiations on effective measures leading to nuclear disarmament. While recognizing the Conference on Disarmament as the world's single multilateral disarmament negotiating forum, the Secretary-General suggested that the nuclear Powers actively engage with other States on the issue in the Conference on Disarmament.

The reason why the Secretary-General made that call is because the Conference on Disarmament has not been able to live up to its raison d'être — nuclear disarmament — for more than three decades. It is also a fact that the Conference on Disarmament failed to make any substantive progress for 15 years after concluding the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban

Treaty (CTBT) negotiations. Yet, it is astounding that the present quest for revitalization of the Conference on Disarmament arises only from the developments of the past two years and is fixated on a single issue. Ironically, the vociferous condemnation of the present stalemate is championed by the countries that were either themselves responsible for decades of the Conference on Disarmament's inactivity or were notably silent.

In order to clearly assess the reasons underlying the impasse in the Conference on Disarmament, it is important to acknowledge the following basic facts.

The Conference on Disarmament's work or inactivity is a reflection of prevailing political realities, as it does not operate in a vacuum. No treaty that is contrary to the security interests of any of its member States can be negotiated in the Conference on Disarmament. In fact, the rule of consensus was introduced into the Conference on Disarmament's rules of procedure to ensure that point. Hence, achieving progress in the Conference is possible only by meeting or addressing the security concerns of all its member States. The Conferences lack of progress cannot be attributed to its rules of procedure, since landmark instruments, such as the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) and the CTBT, were negotiated successfully under the same rules.

Such facts signify that the problems faced by the Conference on Disarmament are not of an organizational or procedural nature. Therefore, it is time for us to face the reality and recognize the true reasons why the Conference has been dysfunctional.

The Conference on Disarmament's history clearly demonstrates a pattern of negotiating only those agreements that do not undermine or compromise the security interests of powerful States. The Biological Weapons Convention and the CWC were negotiated only when biological and chemical weapons became redundant in terms of their operational utility. The CTBT was concluded once the major Powers had carried out a sufficient number of nuclear tests and further testing became unnecessary when they had alternative techniques available in the form of computer simulation.

The same is the case with the fissile material cut-off treaty (FMCT). Now, after having developed huge stockpiles of nuclear weapons, as well as stocks of fissile material, especially highly enriched uranium and weapons-grade plutonium that can be quickly converted into nuclear warheads, those major Powers are ready to conclude a treaty that will ban only future production of fissile material, since they no longer need more of it. That approach is cost-free to them as it will not undermine or compromise their security.

Moreover, in the past few years, the discriminatory policies pursued by some major Powers regarding nuclear cooperation have created insecurities and imbalances. By sacrificing international non-proliferation goals at the altar of power and profit, such policies have accentuated the asymmetry in fissile material stocks in our region. Regrettably, those discriminatory policies continue and have found no opposition among members of the Nuclear Suppliers Group, comprised of some of the most ardent supporters of the Non-Proliferation Treaty and the strongest critics of lack of progress in the Conference on Disarmament.

For those reasons, Pakistan has been compelled to take a stand against nuclear selectivity and discrimination. No country can be expected to compromise its fundamental security interests for an instrument that is cost-free to all other concerned countries.

If an honest and objective approach is adopted to revitalize the work of the Conference on Disarmament, as well as the whole disarmament machinery, the following steps and measures would need to be taken.

The agenda of the Conference on Disarmament covers a number of critical issues, and all issues need to be treated in an equal and balanced manner. Lack of progress on one issue due to the security concerns of States should not lead to an impasse in the Conference, as other issues on its agenda can and should be taken up for consideration.

Nuclear disarmament remains the longest outstanding issue on the Conference on Disarmament's agenda. The 120-member Non-Aligned Movement, which represents the overwhelming majority of States Members of the United Nations, has consistently deemed nuclear disarmament the highest priority for negotiations in the Conference on Disarmament. That priority was again reaffirmed in the statement made by the representative of NAM yesterday. The plenary meeting should take due note of it.

The proposal for a legal instrument on negative security assurances is another important issue that has been on the agenda of the Conference on Disarmament for several years. A legally binding instrument on negative security assurances would not compromise the strategic interests of any country. In reality, no nuclear-weapon State would consider using nuclear weapons against non-nuclear-weapon States. Even the threat of doing so is morally reprehensible.

We need to recognize the realities and work towards building consensus in the Conference on Disarmament by taking into account the legitimate security interests of all States. The Conference cannot negotiate by cherry-picking issues that some States consider to be ripe. The nuclear-weapon States need to fulfil their obligations to undertake negotiations on effective measures leading to nuclear disarmament in the Conference on Disarmament. Double standards and selectivity in non-proliferation and disarmament measures must be eliminated.

Practical efforts to revitalize the international disarmament machinery must involve convening the fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament, as called for in the NAM statement delivered yesterday. Such a session can make a far-reaching contribution towards furthering the goals of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation in a non-discriminatory, balanced and transparent manner, keeping in view the security interests of all States.

Before concluding, I would like to strike a note of caution against taking the FMCT outside the Conference on Disarmament for negotiations, as we consider the Conference the sole negotiating forum for multilateral disarmament.

In that regard, let me mention some of the arguments made by a major nuclear Power in 2005 in response to the intention of some Member States to introduce a draft resolution in the First Committee that sought to establish ad hoc committees under the General Assembly on the four core issues of the Conference on Disarmament. That nuclear Power stated:

> "The international community needs to continue to focus on getting the CD [Conference on Disarmament] to work, rather than create another 'phantom' CD. ...
>
> "We do not conduct negotiations on vital issues of national and global security via majority vote.
>
> "The reasons for the existing impasse at the CD are no more soluble in New York than they are in Geneva. ... [T]he outcome of this resolution will be to retard the very international non-proliferation and disarmament objectives that its sponsors seek to advance."

While conveying that position, that country expressly stated that it would not participate in any such process and that it would not be bound in any way by any agreement emerging from such a body. It is interesting to note that the same country is now seeking ways to take a particular issue out of the Conference on Disarmament. Such a paradoxical approach is inexplicable.

Let me reiterate that Pakistan will not join any such process, nor would it consider accession to the outcome of any such process. It must be borne in mind that taking the FMCT out of the Conference on Disarmament for negotiations would also create a precedent for a similar modus operandi on other items on the Conference agenda, such as nuclear disarmament and negative security assurances.

Mr. Benmehidi (Algeria) (*spoke in French*): Allow me first to express my sincere thanks to the Secretary-General for his important statement at the 113th meeting, which affirms his personal commitment to disarmament. My thanks also go to Ms. Olga Pellicer, Chair of the Advisory Board on Disarmament Matters, who was kind enough to inform us of the deliberations of her Committee on the agenda item.

My delegation welcomes the initiative taken to organize the high-level meeting, believing that it provides a new opportunity for Member States to continue more clearly and in greater depth their exchanges that began on 24 September 2010, at the initiative of the Secretary-General.

My delegation fully associates itself with the statement made at the 113th meeting by the representative of Egypt on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement.

Algeria attaches the highest importance to disarmament and non-proliferation issues. The debates on the future of the Conference on Disarmament receive the special attention of the Algerian

Government. In fact, given the threats to the nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation regime, the points of view stated today focus on the virtues of multilateral negotiation as the preferred means of taking legitimate security concerns into account, in a spirit of fairness, responsibility and transparency.

Given the varied areas that it deals with, the continued deadlock of the Conference on Disarmament is clearly a cause for real concern. That situation affects the interests of non-nuclear-weapon States in particular. Algeria believes that that deadlock cannot be blamed on a failure of that institutional machinery or on its way of operating. Thus it cannot be attributed to its rules of procedure, in particular the rule of consensus, or on the agenda of the Conference.

However, some believe that the impasse is due to the inflexibility of the rules of procedure, and they propose limiting the scope of the rule of consensus solely to substantive issues and resorting to the vote for procedural matters, such as the establishment of a subsidiary body. It must be said that it is not always easy to differentiate between aspects of substance and those dealing with form, especially when it comes to the particulars of a subsidiary body.

It is clear that the consensus rule is also a way to protect the national security interests of all States equally, not only the strongest. Taking into account the security interests of all, that rule in principle gives legitimacy to a treaty once it has been concluded and ensures its universality and effectiveness.

With regard to the agenda of the Conference on Disarmament, Algeria believes that its components — inspired, moreover, by the Decalogue and underscoring the nuclear threat — are still valid. Indeed, nuclear weapons are still the most serious threat to humankind.

It is worth recalling that the Conference on Disarmament has certainly contributed to multilateral disarmament. Established in 1978 by the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament precisely to revitalize the disarmament machinery at that time, its mandate was to facilitate the implementation of the Programme of Action adopted at that special session (resolution S-10/2, part III). Specifically, the Conference on Disarmament made it possible to adopt the Chemical Weapons Convention and the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, even though the latter has still not entered into force.

Following those two achievements, the Conference was unable to make any further progress. Indeed, the reasons for the deadlock can be found in disarmament and security policies developments outside the framework of the Conference.

In reality, the clear lack of political will to take on all the items on the Conference agenda, on the one hand, and attempts to establish a hierarchy among the points of the Decalogue linked to uncertainties in regional security balances, on the other, are at the root of the current deadlock. The Conference on Disarmament cannot continue its fundamental work without Member States showing the necessary political will to come to joint solutions and to truly deal with challenges to the security of all and to international peace. Therefore, one should act in that regard rather that threaten to condemn the Conference on Disarmament to marginalization by resorting to another mechanism.

It has been proposed that if the deadlock continues, other forums to negotiate the fissile material cut-off treaty (FMCT) could be envisaged. My delegation believes that such a step could prejudice the stated goal of the treaty, namely, the strengthening of non-proliferation, the promotion of nuclear disarmament and universal accession, which remain necessary to give such an agreement the requisite political basis and credibility.

The General Assembly cannot strip the Conference on Disarmament of its prerogatives, or even replace it or deprive it of any fundamental part of its mandate. Apart from setting a precedent heavy with consequences, such a step would call into question the universality and balance to be maintained among the Conference's central and supplementary aspects.

In any case, Algeria supports a comprehensive and balanced approach in the Conference on Disarmament's programme of work that takes the priorities and concerns of all into account. Such a programme of work should address all items on the agenda of the Conference, in particular the main issues that I have just mentioned. In that spirit, the Algerian delegation continues to believe that decision CD/1864, adopted by consensus in May 2009, is still valid. That decision was certainly not a perfect result, but the outcome of a compromise that, as stated in its preamble, is part of a process of development.

Decision CD/1864 did not establish a hierarchy of priorities. It seeks to launch a process of interactive discussions and negotiations to engender a climate of trust and carry out the negotiations on nuclear disarmament and other matters. It would seem that that aspect of decision CD/1864, which is set out clearly in its preamble, has often been forgotten by some and obscured by others, who have retained only the negotiation of the FMCT.

Algeria remains convinced of the need to reiterate the international community's commitment to the vocation of the Conference on Disarmament as the sole multilateral framework for disarmament negotiation. Should differences that prevent the Conference from discharging its mandate persist, it would be fitting to convene the fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament. That would be the opportunity to reaffirm that vocation in the framework of a more comprehensive consideration of the disarmament issues, which should give rise to a new consensus on disarmament priorities and the disarmament machinery, including coordination between the deliberative bodies and the Conference on Disarmament as a negotiating forum.

With regard to the observations and recommendations of the Advisory Board for Disarmament Matters, Algeria supports any initiative likely to promote or effectively relaunch the work of the Conference on Disarmament, while respecting its original mandate.

Mr. Kodama (Japan): Japan would like to associate itself with the statements made at the 113th meeting by the representatives of Australia, on behalf of the non-proliferation and disarmament initiative, and of the Netherlands, on behalf of more than 40 countries.

In realizing a world without nuclear weapons, multilateral disarmament efforts by all nuclear-weapon States and concerted action on the part of the international community as a whole are essential. From that standpoint, the role of the Conference on Disarmament as the single multilateral disarmament negotiating forum is highly important, as it brings together nuclear-weapon States and States not party to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). The Conference and its preceding body have drafted critical treaties in the area of disarmament, such as the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, the Biological Weapons Convention, th Chemical Weapons Convention and the Comprehensiv Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty.

Nearly one year has passed since the high-leve meeting on revitalizing the work of the Conference o Disarmament and taking forward multilatera disarmament negotiations, in which a unanimou political consensus to break the deadlock of th Conference on Disarmament was achieved. Howeve during this period we have not been able to seize th opportunity afforded by such consensus.

As the anniversaries of the atomic bombings o Hiroshima and Nagasaki once again approach and th endurance of Japan's citizens approaches its limits further stagnation cannot be permitted. We mus immediately begin substantive work on the core agend items of the Conference on Disarmament and mus advance nuclear disarmament, the fissile material cut off treaty (FMCT), negative security assurances an prevention of an arms race in outer space.

If the Conference on Disarmament is unable t break the deadlock, we must consider appropriat alternatives, such as making greater use of the Genera Assembly. In that regard, it is extremely regrettabl that uncooperative action on the part of one country has prevented the Conference from carrying out it highly important work of advancing nuclea disarmament for the good of the internationa community. That state of affairs also calls into questio the Conference's current form.

From that viewpoint, today's follow-up meetin and the upcoming session of the General Assembly particularly the meetings of the First Committee i October, provide us with important opportunities fo the advancement of nuclear disarmament an revitalization of the Conference on Disarmament an disarmament machinery.

Japan places particular importance on an earl launch of the FMCT negotiations. Together with th Government of Australia, we have hosted three exper side events on the margin of the Conference o Disarmament and have had more detailed discussion on complex technical issues than have ever taken plac within the Conference. Following those side events, i addition to the informal meetings of the Conference o Disarmament on the FMCT held in the past severa years, we can consider that the technical discussion have, for the most part, been completed. We ar

therefore now at the stage where we must begin the negotiations. We must proceed with political discussions to that end.

Cooperating closely with nine other non-nuclear-weapon States, Japan recently launched the non-proliferation and disarmament initiative. We have already convened two ministerial-level meetings, in September last year and in April this year, to contribute to the steadfast implementation of agreements reached on certain issues at the 2010 NPT Review Conference. Japan is determined to develop, in full cooperation with those nine States, effective proposals to achieve concrete progress on nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation, including an early start of the negotiations towards the FMCT and enhancement of transparency.

It is essential to maintain the successful momentum of the most recent NPT Review Conference and to continue to promote positive action towards disarmament and non-proliferation. Much can also be done here in New York to support such action. To that end, Japan co-organized a seminar with Poland and Turkey in May this year, receiving a strongly positive response from the diplomatic community in New York. I look forward to further efforts of that kind so as to make a continuing contribution to promoting disarmament and non-proliferation and to lead to the revitalization of the Conference on Disarmament and disarmament machinery.

Mr. Cabral (Portugal): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the informal group of observer States to the Conference on Disarmament.

I would like first to commend the President for scheduling this debate at this very appropriate moment. Disarmament and non-proliferation are issues of global concern. Thus, the observer States welcome this opportunity to offer their views.

At the outset, I can affirm that the group's members are fully committed to the Conference on Disarmament and to its revitalization. While recognizing that revitalization is a multidimensional process, I will limit my remarks to the topic of enlargement, as it constitutes the raison d'être of our group.

In fact, enlargement is long overdue, as the last expansion dates back to 1999. Allow me at this point to recall that the rules of procedure state that "The membership of the Conference will be reviewed at regular intervals" — which is hardly the case.

However, the main reason for our appeal is political. In fact, our reasoning is quite simple and straightforward. The current membership of the Conference on Disarmament no longer reflects the world as it is. Twelve years have passed since the most recent expansion. That situation is not compatible with today's reality and is certainly not sustainable if the goal is to get the Conference back to work.

Picking a line repeated countless times, the Conference on Disarmament does not work in a vacuum. Indeed, it should not. However, in order to be reconnected with the international community and with reality, the Conference needs, first and foremost, to understand that the world has changed since 1999.

The Conference on Disarmament should become more open and more inclusive. It should seriously and urgently consider inviting more countries to join, making it more representative of the world in which we live. Furthermore, we ought to keep in mind that while the membership of the Conference is limited, the decisions are global in nature. They matter to all.

To be truly successful, that transformation process should be inclusive and fully transparent, rather than limited and conservative. In our view, enlargement is an asset, not a liability. It represents a new opportunity, a fresh start, for the Conference on Disarmament. The simple fact that there are countries which have an interest in joining the Conference represents a clear and powerful political statement in favour of its continued relevance in today's world. If we may say so, enlargement would work to renew the legitimacy of the Conference, which, bearing in mind the current state of affairs, is something that should be duly considered.

In this context, we reiterate our call for the early nomination of a special rapporteur to review the issue of membership. In any case — and allow me to be very clear on this point — the appointment of a rapporteur does not prejudge any particular outcome. Needless to say, decisions are up to the member States of the Conference on Disarmament.

We also take this opportunity to stress that our view is shared by a large number of Member States, regional groups and other formations — for example, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, the

European Union and the Eastern European Group — which, during this year's session and today again, expressed their strong support for the expansion of the membership and for the appointment of a special rapporteur.

Our group spoke on the issue of expansion of the Conference on Disarmament during several of the Conference's plenary sessions during the first two parts of its 2011 annual session. We also briefed the Secretary-General's Advisory Board on the matter at its 56th session. Thus we reiterate our call for the issue of membership to be considered in the context of the ongoing revitalization debate.

While I have the floor, I should like to make a few more additional comments on a national basis. In this capacity, we fully subscribe to the statement delivered on behalf of the European Union at the 113th meeting and that of the informal group of observer States that I have just delivered.

I would like to state that my country recognizes the role of the Conference on Disarmament as the sole multilateral disarmament negotiating forum. Portugal is therefore committed to actively supporting the Conference's work. By the same token, the Conference must also do its part, namely, to take keep pace with the current disarmament agenda.

We should keep in mind that while the Conference's membership is limited, its decisions are global in nature. They matter to us all. The fact therefore that there are countries interested in joining the Conference despite the longstanding stalemate represents an unequivocal and powerful political statement in favour of the Conference's relevance. In our view, such enlargement would strengthen the Conference's legitimacy. While we recognize that enlargement is not in itself the solution, it is certainly part of the answer for a better functioning Conference.

Mr. Waxman (Israel): Israel assigns importance to discussing the issue of the revitalization of the Conference on Disarmament. It is indeed timely that we discuss this issue in earnest — not merely because of the longstanding stalemate that has characterized the Conference's work, but mainly because of the calls to take outside the Conference issues that fall under the agenda of that body, or even to replace the Conference with another body purportedly more suited for the task.

Israel does not support those calls, nor do we find them helpful for the promotion of meaningful work in the Conference. While there can be no disputing that the Conference is in need of an updated and clear vision that would allow it to overcome the extended stalemate, its revitalization has to take place from within the Conference itself. There are no magic wands that will provide us with a better solution or an institution that would conduct a more meaningful disarmament negotiating process.

The Conference on Disarmament is a unique entity that is widely recognized as the sole multilateral negotiating body in the disarmament sphere. Its uniqueness stems from its membership — which includes the States of greatest relevance to these issues — and from its rules of procedure. Although the rules of procedure are criticized by some as outdated and as a reflection of past geopolitical realities, Israel remains convinced that they are well suited to the complexity and sensitivity of the issues placed on the Conference's agenda. The rules of procedure, particularly the rule of consensus, reflect the need to protect vital security interests and to provide negotiating States with the comfort levels required for dealing with such critical issues.

One must examine sincerely whether the complexities of the multilateral arena ought to be circumvented by the attempts to take outside the Conference the issues that were mandated to it in accordance with the General Assembly's special session on disarmament in 1978, and whether such attempts could yield the desired results.

In the conventional sphere, independent processes have not been able to date to attract into their fold the most relevant countries — those whose participation in the new legal arrangement will make the most significant changes to the situation on the ground. The Convention on Cluster Munitions is definitely such a case. While over a hundred States signed this instrument, a realistic examination shows that around 90 per cent of cluster munitions arsenals have remained outside the treaty. Relevant States have simply not gone along and are seeking solutions elsewhere. In this respect, the non-conventional sphere is even more complex.

Israel does not regard taking issues out of the Conference on Disarmament as a viable or a helpful proposal. We are of the view that the Conference

should focus on ways to enhance its own productivity in ways that would be meaningful. While a stalemate persists over the four core issues, there is no reason why the Conference should not conduct substantive work, and indeed negotiations, on other issues on its agenda.

An agreed formula could and should be found that recognizes the continued importance and validity that the international community attributes to the four core issues, and at the same time steers the Conference into a pragmatic approach, which will result in negotiating other issues which may have a vital impact on security and stability. One such important item is agenda item 4, dedicated to transparency in armaments. There are many issues of importance that could be taken up under this agenda item, such as negotiating a ban on the transfer of armaments to terrorists or man-portable air defence systems. As long as the stalemate continues, an agreement could and should be reached on the promotion of other relevant issues.

The Conference on Disarmament has served the international community well in past years. It is too vital an institution to be cast aside. We are confident that the Conference has much to contribute in the future. Let us not take a path that might prevent this institution from doing so. Instead, let us focus on realistic and useful ways to heave this wagon forward.

Mr. Al Habib (Islamic Republic of Iran): I wish to associate myself with the statement made at the 113th meeting by the representative of Egypt on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement.

I would like to begin my statement with a wise proverb, which says, "A poor workman blames his tools". As a tool, the Conference on Disarmament, through the development of major international legal instruments on disarmament, has perfectly proven its efficiency and the effectiveness of its rules of procedure, including the rule of consensus, even in the complex political and security context of the cold war.

Although there are continued attempts to conceal the political nature of Conference inactivity using technical questions, such as its rules of procedure, as the Advisory Board on Disarmament Matters appropriately concluded in its recent report, what appeared to be procedural problems are in fact political ones.

The lack of political will is the principal problem of the Conference on Disarmament. Consequently, the only option to give a boost to its activity is to inject political will into this important and irreplaceable forum, which is the sole multilateral negotiating body on disarmament.

We believe that any possible initiative to assess the Conference's performance should be transparent, comprehensive, fair and, most importantly, driven by Member States. It should focus on addressing the root causes of the problem. The main objective of any such assessment should be to enhance the performance of the Conference while preserving its nature, role, purpose and power.

In any performance appraisal of the Conference, we have to be cautious not to mix our considerations with exaggeration, pessimism, prejudgment and distrustful emotional diagnoses, as such an approach would only further complicate and aggravate the situation.

Unlike some who favour changing the consensus rule of the Conference, we believe that the Conference cannot be improved by changing the format or modality of its rules of procedure, because, due to the sensitive nature of disarmament treaties that are closely related to the supreme national security interests of States, consensus is the only way to develop such treaties, as was the case in the past when disarmament treaties were concluded both within and outside the Conference.

The inactivity in the Conference over the past decade resulted from the lack of political will; the disinclination of some States to take into account the security interests of all States and to consider all core issues in a comprehensive and balanced manner; the fact that some countries consider the Conference as a single-issue venue and are not willing to recognize the importance of other issues; the unwillingness of certain countries even to start the much longed-for and long-delayed negotiations on a nuclear weapons convention to eliminate the threat posed to humanity by the existence of such weapons, while nuclear disarmament has been identified by the international community as the highest priority in the field of disarmament, as reflected in the consensus outcome (resolution S-10/2) of the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament (SSOD-I); and the reluctance of those States to negotiate universal, legally binding

instruments on negative security assurances for non-nuclear-weapon States and on the prevention of an arms race in outer space.

We consider the total elimination of nuclear weapons to be the highest priority and the only absolute guarantee against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons. For that reason, we believe that the Conference should focus on advancing the nuclear disarmament agenda and the total elimination of nuclear weapons, leading to a world free of nuclear weapons.

In this context, we strongly support the early commencement by the Conference on Disarmament of negotiations on a phased programme for the complete elimination of nuclear weapons within a specified time frame, including a nuclear weapons convention. We also support a start to negotiations to conclude universal, unconditional and legally binding instruments on negative security assurances to non-nuclear-weapon States and on the prevention of an arms race in outer space.

We underline the validity of multilateralism as the core principle of negotiations in the field of disarmament and non-proliferation, and, while we reiterate our determination to promote this valuable principle, we recall the paramount importance and continued validity of the consensus outcome SSOD-I. We strongly believe that, since the Conference on Disarmament was established by SSOD-I, the best way to address its challenges is to convene a fourth special session — a proposal that enjoys the strong support of many countries, in particular the 120 States members of the Non-Aligned Movement.

Finally, we believe that the roles of neither such a fourth special session nor of the Conference on Disarmament can be replaced with alternative initiatives. The problems presently facing the Conference on Disarmament are nothing new. The best way to address this challenge is to cross the stream where it is shallowest.

Ms. Anderson (Ireland): The High-level Meeting convened by the Secretary-General in September 2010 was helpful in highlighting States' views on the root causes of the stalemate in the Conference on Disarmament. That meeting also underlined the strong desire of the international community to move from discussion to action. It is not only the working methods of the Conference on Disarmament that need to be reassessed, but those of the United Nations Disarmament Commission and of the First Committee as well. All three bodies must be more responsive and ready to change the way they go about their business.

My country's approach to disarmament is rooted in the firm conviction that multilateral cooperation is in the interest of all, and most particularly serves the interests of smaller States, which rely on a strong, rules-based international system. One of the main reasons we have convened here is because the sole multilateral disarmament negotiating body — the Conference on Disarmament — is not functioning properly. Given the Conference's vitally important remit, this dysfunction is deeply worrying.

As we search for a solution, it is worth remembering that the Conference on Disarmament has, in the past, made an outstanding contribution in the area of arms control and disarmament. There is no reason why it cannot do so again.

Given this track record, it is all the more disappointing that the Conference has not managed to engage in the substantive work of negotiation for more than 16 years. Ireland has not seen any meaningful work done there since we became a member in 1999. This situation is hard to explain or defend. It is a poor reflection on multilateralism and has obvious implications for international peace and security. While the stagnation in the Conference on Disarmament might have been understandable while there was no movement in the wider disarmament context, it now stands in stark contrast to the positive developments we have seen elsewhere in recent years.

Ireland stands ready to engage in negotiations on any or all of the four core issues on the Conference on Disarmament's agenda. While every State has the right to promote and defend its national security interests, in our view the consensus rule was never envisaged as a mechanism to allow one State to frustrate the desire of the vast majority of the membership to engage in negotiations on any particular issue. The resulting inability of the Conference on Disarmament to engage in negotiations on any issue on its agenda is, in our view, unsustainable. Negotiations on any of the core issues will take time — in all likelihood many years. Specific national concerns can be accommodated in the course of negotiations and, in any event, agreement cannot be imposed under the consensus rule. It is

axiomatic, however, that negotiations must begin if agreement is ever to be reached.

My country's primary objective in the Conference on Disarmament is the promotion of nuclear disarmament. This may be facilitated in a number of ways, including by the conclusion of an appropriate treaty on fissile material, which would include a verification mechanism and cover existing stocks, and of a universal, legally-binding agreement on negative security assurances. The prevention of an arms race in outer space is an issue deserving of urgent attention before the window of opportunity to prevent such an arms race is lost.

While substantive differences are at the root of the paralysis in the Conference on Disarmament, we believe that the way in which the Conference organizes itself it is a contributory factor. Requiring consensus even to begin negotiations, as well as for the most basic procedural decisions, is conducive to the kind of deadlock with which we are all too familiar.

Another factor inhibiting progress is the interpretation of the requirement to adopt annually a programme of work necessitating the inclusion of complex negotiating mandates and other details, rather than being merely a calendar of activities, as in most other multilateral bodies.

The expansion of the membership of the Conference on Disarmament and the greater involvement of civil society in its work would, in our view, enhance the representation in the Conference of global public opinion and strengthen its standing and credibility.

Like other speakers, I welcome the recommendations made by the Secretary-General's Advisory Board and hope that they can guide us forward in breaking the impasse in the Conference on Disarmament. At the same time, we cannot evade the stark reality that the responsibility for devising and implementing solutions to global problems rests primarily with States. The issue is fundamentally that of political will.

Such responsibilities go well beyond the Conference on Disarmament alone. The Disarmament Commission has had no substantive outcome for 12 years in succession, a situation which should not continue. The working practices of the First Committee also need the attention of Member States.

While the Committee should be the principal forum for debate on the most pressing issues in the field of disarmament and non-proliferation and how to address them, we see instead an ineffective use of time, with the ritualistic submission of resolutions whose content remains virtually unchanged from year to year, in many cases adding limited value.

In this time of austerity, all of us have to justify how we allocate our scarce resources. Functioning disarmament machinery is a priority, but there has to be a relationship between input and outcome.

I would like to conclude by expressing the hope that our exchanges today will act as a call to action and will encourage those most directly concerned to reassess their approach, accepting the responsibility they share with the international community to engage, to negotiate and to formulate agreements which will lead us towards the ultimate goal of a nuclear-weapon-free world.

Ireland stands ready to consider all ideas for taking us forward, including the recommendations to the Secretary-General by the Advisory Board, through General Assembly activity and also the possibility — an idea to which Ireland is fully open — of another special session on disarmament. We look forward to further discussions in the First Committee in October.

Mr. Cancela (Uruguay) (*spoke in Spanish*): At the outset, as I see so many seats empty in this Hall and note the absence of so many of my colleagues who are firmly committed to disarmament and non-proliferation and who have a great interest in today's debate, let me say that I find it regrettable that, owing to organizational problems in connection with this debate, the level of participation is low, as is the turnout.

My country aligns itself with the statement made by the Permanent Representative of the Netherlands on behalf of the States that requested that this debate be convened.

Uruguay was one of the countries that requested a plenary meeting under agenda item 162, entitled "Follow-up to the high-level meeting held on 24 September 2010: revitalizing the work of the Conference on Disarmament and taking forward multilateral disarmament negotiations". We therefore welcome this meeting.

The high-level meeting held on 24 September 2010 made clear the importance that the States Members of the United Nations attach to multilateralism and the widespread concern at impasse affecting the Conference on Disarmament, which undermines its credibility and affects the United Nations system as a whole.

It also became clear that there was a need promptly to start negotiations on a non-discriminatory and internationally verifiable treaty aimed at banning the production of fissile material for the manufacture of nuclear weapons, and a need to start substantive work on nuclear disarmament issues, negative security assurances and the prevention of an arms race in outer space.

Regrettably, the Conference on Disarmament once again lost an invaluable opportunity in the substantive session this year, as it was unable to make progress on the issues under its consideration or to send any hopeful signals that the situation would change in the near future.

We all are aware of and have recognized the achievements of the Conference on Disarmament, and its predecessors, as a genuine forum where the main instruments of arms limitation were created, to the benefit of the international community as a whole. However, more than 13 years of inaction cannot be justified on the basis of intrinsic deficiencies in the system, lack of political will or the need for consensus. Membership and consensus are privileges that come with responsibilities, thus the Conference on Disarmament must meet the expectations vested in its members, discharge the mandate entrusted to it and work according to the needs of our times.

Uruguay acknowledges the fact that in view of such a widespread sense of failure, it is imperative to seek quick and effective solutions in order to relaunch the work of the Conference on Disarmament.

To that end, I should like to put forward three specific proposals for the revitalization of multilateral negotiations in these areas.

First, we must take advantage of the current political juncture, which has allowed for a return to moderate multilateralism. There must be a reaffirmation of the prerogatives and legitimacy of the bodies that the international community has created to deal with disarmament matters, and respect for international law must be upheld as indispensable norm for the peaceful coexistence of nations.

Accordingly, Uruguay calls on the Conference on Disarmament to start, without further delay, negotiations on a non-discriminatory and internationally verifiable treaty for the prohibition of the production of fissile material intended for the manufacture of nuclear weapons. Our country also urges that unconditional negotiations for a legally binding agreement on negative security assurances be commenced so as to ensure that non-nuclear States do not suffer from the disastrous consequences of the use or threat of use of this type of weapons by nuclear-weapon States.

Non-nuclear States' justified interest in and legitimate aspirations to negative security assurances are legally and politically supported by Article 2.4 of the Charter of the United Nations. Likewise, Uruguay calls for the negotiation of new, effective and verifiable multilateral instruments, with a view to preventing an arms race, including the deployment of weapons in outer space.

Secondly, Uruguay believes that one way to revitalize the work of the Conference on Disarmament would be to extend its membership to those States that have expressed a legitimate interest in joining. In this respect, I associate myself with the statement made by the representative of Portugal on behalf of the informal group of observers of the Conference on Disarmament. Our country has formalized its aspiration to join the Conference on Disarmament, along with 25 other States that since 1982 have advocated for the expansion of that body. Uruguay therefore proposes appointing a special coordinator for the Conference on Disarmament in order to study the expansion of its membership in 2011.

Thirdly, if the Conference on Disarmament is not capable of overcoming its impasse, the General Assembly must inevitably act according to the mandate conferred on it by the United Nations Charter, whose Article 11 establishes that the Assembly

> "may consider the general principles of cooperation in the maintenance of international peace and security, including the principles governing disarmament and the regulation of armaments, and may make recommendations with regard to such principles to the Members or to the Security Council".

Mr. Çobanoğlu (Turkey): Turkey attaches great significance to the work of the Conference on Disarmament as the sole multilateral disarmament negotiating body, and we wish to see the resumption of its substantive work. For this reason, Turkey was a co-signatory to the letter that requested the convening of today's meeting.

We align ourselves with the statement delivered yesterday by the Permanent Representative of the Netherlands on behalf of the 41 countries that signed that letter. Turkey also aligns itself with the statement made by the Permanent Representative of Australia on behalf of the Non-Proliferation and Disarmament Initiative. Since many of our views have already been covered by those statements, I will confine myself to the following additional points in my national capacity.

First, while there are many different views as to how revitalize the Conference on Disarmament, our preference for this revitalization process is that it take place within the Conference itself. Having said that, other efforts, such as today's meeting, could be useful to build momentum and convey the strong expectation of the international community for the resumption of the substantive work of the Conference.

Secondly, while concentrating on the revitalization of the work of the Conference on Disarmament, we should not lose sight of the fact that the existing problems are not limited to the Conference. In fact, they cover all the multilateral disarmament machinery. This is not to say that the problems lie with the United Nations disarmament machinery. On the contrary, as Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon very eloquently put it in his opening statement yesterday (see A/65/PV.113), the problem lies not with the vehicle but with the driver. We are convinced that these problems can be comprehensively overcome only through political will and flexibility, which are to be shown by all parties.

Thirdly, any discussion on the working methods of the Conference on Disarmament should take into account the fact that the rule of consensus is an essential tool when it comes to international security issues. All countries may need this tool from time to time in order to safeguard their legitimate security interests. In our opinion, there is no alternative to the rule of consensus.

Finally, unlike some other delegations, we believe that the enlargement of the Conference on Disarmament is not a priority within the context of its revitalization. In our view, the present impasse in the Conference on Disarmament has nothing to do with its composition. In fact, if the Conference cannot resolve its problems within its existing composition, it would be highly unlikely, if not impossible, for these problems to be solved within an enlarged group, which will represent difference priorities and different interests. We also believe that any discussion on the enlargement of the Conference should address the question of the potential contributions of the aspiring Conference members to its work on a case-by-case basis.

We hope to see the Conference revitalized, the concerns of all Member States addressed, substantive work on the core issues initiated and the long-standing stalemate thus overcome with the present membership composition of the Conference.

Mr. Raytchev (Bulgaria): Let me begin by expressing my delegation's deep appreciation to President Deiss and Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon for convening this debate. Being among the countries that called for it, we are especially grateful to be given the opportunity to have a follow-up discussion to the High-level Meeting on the Revitalization of the Work of the Conference on Disarmament, held in September 2010.

Bulgaria aligns itself with the statement made on behalf of the European Union and with that made by the representative of the Netherlands on behalf of a cross-regional group of States. I will just highlight a few points that are important to us.

We all hoped that the High-level Meeting held in September 2010 would stimulate positive developments in the Conference on Disarmament. Regrettably, this has not been the case, and the Conference has so far failed to seize the momentum in global disarmament and non-proliferation. However, we all agree that the impasse cannot and should not continue. Fifteen years have already been lost, and we cannot afford the luxury of losing even more time.

The irony is that the Conference on Disarmament should be more relevant than ever and overloaded with work now, in times of asymmetrical threats and common security challenges, and the international community should be more convinced than ever of multilateralism as the appropriate approach. The longer

the impasse continues, the more the relevance of the Conference on Disarmament is called into question.

The excuses for this — the consensus rule and the lack of political will, among others — are well-known. The Conference on Disarmament itself cannot be blamed. The responsibility lies with us, its members. Change should come from within. We should all ask ourselves how strongly we want to make the Conference on Disarmament relevant and credible again. The consensus rule is there, but we need to be creative about it instead of using it to hold the Conference hostage. This rule was created in order to enable members to express their common will based on compromise and not in order to impose the view of one member on all.

The world is interconnected. New realities require new approaches. If the Conference on Disarmament does not adapt to the new challenges and conditions quickly, it will render itself irrelevant. The new dynamic is fast-paced, as should be the response of the Conference. The Conference must deliver, or it risks pushing the international community to explore alternative avenues for multilateral negotiations related to disarmament and non-proliferation.

A revitalized Conference on Disarmament means a functioning Conference on Disarmament that is in line with the new realities. The two most pressing issues, however, persist: first, the adoption of a programme of work; and secondly, the start of negotiations on a fissile material cut-off treaty without delay. Any national security concern, if legitimate, could be addressed as part of a negotiation process rather than blocking the substantive work of the Conference. Nothing should be precluded from consideration if negotiation on a fissile material cut-off treaty were to start.

Enlargement of the membership of the Conference on Disarmament would definitely be a step towards adapting to the new realities. New members would bring new energy and new ideas. Civil society is also a part of the process, and non-governmental organizations and research institutions have an important role to play. We join the calls for improved methods of work, for the First Committee and the United Nations Disarmament Commission as well.

We stand ready to work for these goals in the run up to the sixty-sixth session of the First Committee in October. I would like to conclude, however, by citing Bertholt Brecht who said "because things are the way they are, things will not stay the way they are". This idea is 100 per cent applicable to the Conference on Disarmament as it is today.

Mr. Cabactulan (Philippines): The Philippines associates itself with the statement delivered by the Permanent Representative of Egypt on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement. My delegation also supports the statement delivered by the representatives of Portugal on behalf of the informal group of observer States to the Conference on Disarmament and of the Netherlands on behalf of the group of like-minded States.

The Philippines reaffirms its belief that multilateral diplomacy is the best way to achieve further progress in nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. At the Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons in May 2010, States parties took a significant step forward in these areas when they adopted the Conference's Outcome Document (NPT/CONF.2010/50 (Vol. I)). In this regard, the Philippines reminds States parties of their obligation to implement the action plan, as well as the section on the implementation of the 1995 resolution on the Middle East, as listed in the conclusions and recommendations section of the Document.

One action was undertaken when the High-level Meeting was held in September 2010. The debate today is a continuation of that Meeting held almost one year ago. In spite of the time that has elapsed since then — in fact, in the more than 15 years that have passed since the Conference on Disarmament agreed on the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty — the impasse persists.

This Sisyphean state of affairs cannot be allowed to continue. Based on discussions at the last High-level Meeting in September, the Philippines and many other delegations find the situation untenable. The Conference on Disarmament must agree on and implement a programme of work. If it cannot, other definitive actions must be undertaken. Furthermore, since the bottom-up approach has paralysed efforts to reform the Conference due to the fact that the rule of consensus vests in every Conference member a veto-like power, it is now imperative that the General Assembly, which created the Conference on

Disarmament, assert its power through a top-down approach.

The Philippines, together with several other delegations that form the informal group of observer States, sees an urgent need for the Conference on Disarmament to expand its membership. In the interest of promoting greater inclusivity and dynamism in the Conference, the Philippines calls for a review of the membership of the Conference as provided for in its rules of procedure, and to allow for the expansion of its membership. Numerous countries, presently observers in the Conference, possess the legitimate aspiration to full membership. To facilitate this review, the Philippines calls for the Conference on Disarmament to appoint a special rapporteur/coordinator on enlargement.

Yet, alternative means must also be considered. The Conference on Disarmament may be known as the sole multilateral disarmament body, but disarmament agreements have been conceived outside it, including the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-personnel Mines and on Their Destruction and the Convention on Cluster Munitions. Under these Conventions, not all countries joined at their inceptions and in fact still have not joined, but that does not preclude the possibility of States eventually becoming parties. The key, as the Philippines sees it, is to begin negotiations at the soonest possible time.

Another method that could be emulated is the way in which preparations are being made for the negotiation of an arms trade treaty, which fell within the ambit of the General Assembly, which decided that a United Nations Conference would be held to negotiate the treaty. The Philippines also continues to support calls for convening the fourth special session on disarmament (SSOD-IV), which could comprehensively reappraise and revitalize the United Nations disarmament machinery.

For my delegation, what is important is not which body negotiates, but that negotiations actually begin and result in something more tangible and concrete than mere factual reports of meetings, as was the case with the last meeting of the Disarmament Commission in April.

We the States present here today have a choice and a difficult decision to make. Do we remain and stay confined in the Conference on Disarmament, hoping that intractable issues that have plagued the Conference will magically dissipate over time, leading to genuine progress towards negotiating a disarmament agenda? Or do we dare to go beyond and follow, for instance, the path taken by a significant number of countries in seeking alternative recourse, as was the case in the negotiations for the Ottawa and Oslo Conventions? Do we set up a process parallel to the Conference on Disarmament? Do we hope that we can replicate the success of the first special session on disarmament in 1978 and pin our hopes on SSOD-IV? Do we have to commission some high-level group to study further what must be done? Do we go the route of the General Assembly and give this body a more central and active role to move multilateral disarmament negotiations forward?

The right answer is unfortunately unclear. What is clear to us is that we must make a choice and follow through on it sooner rather than later. The choice might be to give the General Assembly a more central and active role and seek innovative and alternative means of causing multilateral disarmament negotiations to advance. If we do not make a choice and act, we will doom ourselves to stagnation and inactivity, thereby increasing the chance that weapons that have been held in abeyance thus far may be unleashed to devastating and horrific effect.

Mr. Manjeev Singh Puri (India): I join other colleagues in thanking the President for convening this follow-up meeting to the High-level Meeting convened by the Secretary-General, which was attended by our Minister for External Affairs, His Excellency Sri S. M. Krishna, on 24 September 2010.

India associates itself with the statement made on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement.

Almost one year has elapsed since the convening of the High-level Meeting. The Conference on Disarmament is still unable to undertake its primary task of negotiating multilateral treaties. We share the disappointment of the Member States on the continuing impasse in the Conference. We believe that the Conference on Disarmament or its rules of procedure are not to be blamed for this impasse. We believe that today's meeting should send a strong message of support for the Conference on Disarmament as the single multilateral disarmament negotiating forum and to provide political impetus to the multilateral agenda, which includes early commencement of negotiations on

an fissile material cut-off treaty in the Conference on Disarmament.

The Conference on Disarmament adopted a consensus decision in May 2009 on its programme of work, which included the immediate commencement of negotiations on a fissile material cut-off treaty (FMCT). The High-level Meeting of 24 September 2010 demonstrated a very broad measure of support for CD/1864. In fact, the first recommendation of that meeting, reiterated subsequently by the Secretary-General in his address to the Conference on Disarmament on 26 January, calls for the Conference to adopt that, or a similar programme of work, in 2011.

India will not stand in the way if consensus emerges on a programme of work that picks up from where we were in terms of the consensus decision CD/1864, if such a decision facilitates the early commencement of substantive work in the Conference, including negotiation of an FMCT on the basis of the mandate contained in CD/1299. This is without prejudice to the priority we attach to nuclear disarmament.

India has been steadfast in its support for global, non-discriminatory, verifiable nuclear disarmament. Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi presented a visionary action plan for a nuclear-weapon-free and non-violent world order. This plan sets out a road map for achieving nuclear disarmament in a time-bound, universal, non-discriminatory, phased and verifiable manner. It may be recalled that the Final Document of the first special session on disarmament (resolution S-10/2) accorded nuclear disarmament the highest priority. We believe that the goal of nuclear disarmament can be achieved by a step-by-step process underwritten by a universal commitment and an agreed multilateral framework that is global and non-discriminatory. We need a meaningful dialogue among all States possessing nuclear weapons in order to build trust and confidence and to reduce the salience of such weapons in international affairs and security doctrines.

I would like to reaffirm our support for the Conference on Disarmament as the single multilateral negotiating forum, recognized as such by the international community. The Conference continues to have the mandate, the membership, the credibility and the rules of procedure to discharge that responsibility. It is up to Member States to make it work by negotiating multilateral treaties that can be universally implemented. Proposals that question the viability or relevance of the Conference, or that suggest unrealistic alternatives, will not lead to useful or productive results in taking forward the agreed multilateral agenda with the participation of all relevant countries. We hope that our discussions today will build positive momentum for the disarmament agenda and reaffirm the critical role of the Conference on Disarmament as the single multilateral negotiating forum for achieving our common goals.

Mrs. Aitimova (Kazakhstan): My delegation commends the President for following up on the important High-level Meeting that the Secretary-General convened on 24 September last year on the theme of revitalizing the work of the Conference on Disarmament and taking forward multilateral disarmament negotiations.

We also thank President Deiss; Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon; the Chair of the Advisory Board on Disarmament Matters, Ms. Olga Pellicer; and Mr. Kassym-Jomart Tokayev, Secretary-General of the Conference on Disarmament and Director-General of the United Nations Office at Geneva, for their statements. Their insights and the Secretary-General's summary of the aforementioned meeting point to significant key steps for strengthening the disarmament machinery with a common vision for disarmament and non-proliferation. We also reiterate that disarmament helps address other global challenges, including poverty reduction, climate change and reaching the Millennium Development Goals.

Kazakhstan is a firm and consistent supporter of the vision of nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament, as demonstrated by its decision to shut down its nuclear test site and renounce one of the world's largest nuclear arsenals. As a member of the Conference on Disarmament, Kazakhstan attaches great importance to that forum and the contribution it has made in the past. However, regrettably, the Conference has failed to live up to expectations. Now is the moment to evaluate concrete strategies for overcoming the deadlock of the past decade on generally accepted key issues in order to accelerate the process of disarmament and non-proliferation.

Like other Member States, Kazakhstan agrees that an early start to negotiations on a non-discriminatory, multilateral and internationally

verifiable fissile material cut-off treaty (FMCT) is critical. Such a treaty would keep illegitimate military nuclear programmes to a minimum and considerably improve control over existing materials, thus greatly reducing the threat of nuclear terrorism.

As the country that is home to the Baikonur Cosmodrome space launch complex, and is involved in international cooperation on outer space, as well as its own national space development on a multilateral cooperative basis, Kazakhstan calls for the strict maintenance of peaceful activities in outer space and urges the Conference to include this issue on its agenda. Considering the increasing number of countries involved in and dependent on space programmes, we should further promote the prevention of an arms race in outer space by engaging other international entities that deal with issues of space exploration.

The President of my country, Nursultan Nazarbayev, speaking at the Global Summit on Nuclear Security in Washington, D.C., in April 2010, has called for the drafting of an international legally binding instrument on security assurances by nuclear Powers to non-nuclear-weapon States. It is only such assurances that can effectively keep in check the aspirations of certain non-nuclear States to acquire nuclear weapons as a guarantee of their own security. The next step should be drafting a universal declaration of a nuclear-weapon-free world, which would reaffirm the determination of all States to move willingly and progressively towards a convention on a nuclear-weapon-free world.

My delegation concurs with other Member States that the present impasse hurts the credibility and calls into question the Conference on Disarmament's relevance. The current stagnation in multilateral negotiations is understood to be due not just to a lack of political will, but also to lacunae in the disarmament machinery.

To summarize, my delegation calls on the General Assembly and member States to consider ways to review the Conference's mandate, membership, structure and procedures of work, as well as to strengthen disarmament and non-proliferation measures by immediately starting work on an FMCT, the use of outer space for peaceful purposes, a legally binding treaty for negative security assurances, and a declaration or convention outlawing nuclear weapons. The consensus principle must be reconsidered so as to make the Conference a strong and viable entity, rather than taking the policymaking process outside the United Nations, as has been proposed by some States. The work of the Conference should begin with a relevant and effective agenda both for issues set in the past and for those that will emerge in the near future. We therefore fully support the Secretary-General's proposal to appoint a high-level panel of eminent persons to seek ways to strengthen the disarmament machinery, and especially the Conference on Disarmament.

Finally, in closing, I would like to assure the Assembly that Kazakhstan will take every possible step to strengthen the Conference on Disarmament and enhance its commitment to the multilateral disarmament process.

Mr. Husain (Canada): At the outset, let me thank the President of the General Assembly for convening this meeting on this very important topic. I wish that we were assembling today to celebrate a renewed sense of hope and enthusiasm about prospects for a resumption of multilateral disarmament negotiations. We are not. The Conference on Disarmament remains deadlocked and is effectively broken. Critical institutional reform is needed.

That is why, when Canada's Minister of Foreign Affairs, the Honourable John Baird, announced the suspension of Canada's participation in the Conference under the presidency of North Korea, Canada also undertook to lead an initiative to reform the methodology for selecting the President of the Conference on Disarmament. Driving such efforts is Canada's belief that leadership of the Conference is a privilege that should be afforded only to those who promote and adhere to the values and objectives of the Conference on Disarmament. As our Minister has said, it is absurd to have one of the world's worst offenders, when it comes to nuclear proliferation and non-compliance, chairing a disarmament body.

Canada was pleased to serve as the first of the Conference's six rotating Presidents for 2011, and is also among several of the countries serving as President with outstanding non-proliferation credentials and a firm commitment to disarmament.

So far this year, Conference members have had discussions on the Conference's four core agenda items. But let us be clear. The mandate of the

Conference on Disarmament is to negotiate, and not simply to discuss, disarmament. The Conference's 2011 session is nearly over, and positions on a programme of work remain deeply entrenched and mutually exclusive. Our efforts to get the Conference back to work in 2011 have not yet proven successful, though Canada will renew efforts towards that end in August, after North Korea is no longer the President —

The Acting President: I call on the representative of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea on a point of order.

Mr. Ri Tong Il (Democratic People's Republic of Korea): I have asked to speak because the representative of Canada has just referred to the Democratic People's Republic of Korea as North Korea. The Democratic People's Republic of Korea is a State Member of the United Nations, and I kindly ask you, Sir, to call the speaker to order in this matter.

The Acting President: We have taken note of the point of order made by the representative of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, and I ask the representative of Canada to continue with his statement.

Mr. Husain (Canada): In light of the continued stalemate in the Conference on Disarmament, Canada believes that efforts to follow up on last September's High-level Meeting must be pursued in earnest. Canada was among those States at last September's High-level Meeting that spoke in favour of a deadline for the Conference if substantive work — including negotiations — had not commenced by this autumn. Specifically, we believe that the General Assembly at its sixty-sixth session could also take up consideration of how the work of the Conference should be pursued.

Speaking at the Conference on 28 February, Canada's former Minister of Foreign Affairs, the Honourable Lawrence Cannon, again urged Conference members to think outside of the box. We have seen some positive evidence of new thinking this year. The Australian and Japanese side-event initiative on a fissile material cut-off treaty (FMCT) is one clear example. Reluctantly, Canada believes that the time has also come to think outside of the Conference on Disarmament.

An FMCT is Canada's top priority as the next disarmament instrument, and while our preference would be to see negotiations start in the Conference on Disarmament, our patience with non-performing multilateral bodies is not endless. Currently, one country among 65 is blocking the Conference from FMCT negotiations by citing subregional strategic issues. However, tomorrow it could just as easily be another country or countries that abuse the Conference's rule of consensus on a procedural matter in order to stymie substantive multilateral disarmament negotiations. Such was never the intended purpose of the consensus rule.

Canada is of the view that starting an external negotiations process on an FMCT will not further endanger the Conference on Disarmament, which has failed to implement a programme of work since 1998. Accordingly, we welcome the recent statement by the United States that it is consulting on alternative means to begin FMCT negotiations. We agree that success on an FMCT will require the active participation of those States that possess nuclear weapons. With many nuclear-weapon States having declared a moratorium on the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons, now is the time to start FMCT negotiations. Universality is something that can be built over time.

(*spoke in French*)

Canada is flexible on the modalities and venue for FMCT negotiations, and will re-engage in the Conference on Disarmament following North Korea's presidency, to focus on reforming the body and pressing ahead with important matters related to its other core agenda items.

We look forward to the broadest possible discussion of the merits of all possible alternative routes to fissile material cut-off treaty negotiations. One idea that remains on the table is having substantive work take place through the creation of subcommittees of the First Committee. Other scenarios have also been put forward. For our part, Canada is not opposed to convening a fourth special session on disarmament, but we are of the view that the start of negotiations on a fissile material cut-off treaty should not await the outcome of that broader process. We can and should start these negotiations now.

Mr. Le Hoai Trung (Viet Nam): Viet Nam associates itself with the statement made by the representative of Egypt on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement.

Over the past year, we have witnessed a number of positive developments reflected in the entry into force of the New START treaty between the United States and the Russian Federation in February and the adoption of the Outcome Document of the 2010 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT/CONF. 2010/50). Still, conflicts continue in various parts of the world, and instability and new dangers to security have emerged in Asia, the Middle East and North Africa. The danger of an arms race has also increased. Against that backdrop, it is regrettable that the Conference on Disarmament remains in a stalemate, as it still cannot even agree on a programme of work.

The lack of progress in the Conference on Disarmament has not only prevented the Conference from effectively contributing to the promotion of a more peaceful and secure international environment, but also undermined confidence in that important multilateral disarmament forum.

Due to time constraints, we would like to highlight a number of issues. First, nuclear disarmament remains the highest priority in disarmament. I would like to recall the adoption of resolution 65/56 on nuclear disarmament, which called upon the Conference on Disarmament to establish an ad hoc committee on nuclear disarmament early in 2011 and to commence negotiations on a phased programme of nuclear disarmament leading to the total elimination of nuclear weapons. To that end, I urge nuclear-weapon States to take further substantive and practical actions towards complete nuclear disarmament, particularly by taking the lead in commencing negotiations for a nuclear weapons convention.

Secondly, the central role of the United Nations disarmament machinery in the process of disarmament and non-proliferation and arms control should be upheld. We urge the Conference on Disarmament to adopt a balanced and comprehensive programme of work that covers all pressing issues, such as nuclear disarmament, negative security assurances, the prevention of an arms race in outer apace and a fissile material cut-off treaty. To this end, I should like to call for greater political will, flexibility and cooperation.

Thirdly, multilateral disarmament negotiations should be aimed at strengthening peace and international security and achieving the ultimate goal of the elimination of the danger of nuclear war and the implementation of measures to halt and reverse the arms race. Such a negotiations process should be based on the fundamental principles agreed at the first special session of the General Assembly. Those principles include strict observance of the purposes and principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations, respect of the right to participate on an equal footing, with a full recognition of the role of the United Nations in the field of disarmament and due consideration for the vital interests of all peoples of the world.

It is the consistent policy of Viet Nam to strive for peace and support the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, with the goal of general and complete disarmament. Viet Nam has acceded to all major multilateral treaties on the prohibition of weapons of mass destruction and has been an active member of many United Nations disarmament bodies. In the region of South-East Asia, it is also working closely with other members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations and other partners in the implementation of the Treaty on the South-East Asia Nuclear-Weapon-Free-Zone and its Plan of Action. Viet Nam will continue to work with all other international partners in pursuit of further progress in the field of disarmament.

Mr. Heller (Mexico) (*spoke in Spanish*): Mexico fully aligns itself with the statements made by the delegation of the Netherlands on behalf of several States and by the delegation of Australia on behalf of those countries participating in the initiative on disarmament and non-proliferation.

Mexico also welcomes the action taken by the Secretary-General, Mr. Ban Ki-moon, in promoting multilateral negotiations on disarmament in his five-point plan and by convening the high-level meeting held in 2010. Likewise, we take note of the report presented by the Chair of the Advisory Board on Disarmament Matters.

The 2010 high-level meeting revealed the differing views concerning the dysfunctional nature of the various disarmament forums, particularly the Conference on Disarmament. However, it also showed the tremendous interest of the international community in this issue, which concerns us all given that it affects the security and the very survival of humankind.

Mexico has lent its full support to the Conference on Disarmament and its predecessor bodies, all of

which were created to achieve an aim to which my country attaches the highest priority. It is therefore unacceptable that the forum entrusted with negotiating legally binding instruments to safeguard the security of our peoples has not, over the past 15 years, been able to carry out substantive work on any of the items on its agenda and has failed to fulfil its mandate.

Nor is there agreement on the reasons for the paralysis affecting the Conference on Disarmament. Some contend that this is due to external factors and that the Conference is a victim of circumstances. Others believe that the dysfunctional nature of the forum is a result of the fact that it was designed to work in the context of the cold war, not in the multipolar context of the twenty-first century. The impasse may be the result of a combination of both of those factors. Clearly, the working methods of the Conference on Disarmament were designed for different times. This affects its decision-making as well as its substantive work.

The limited nature of membership of the Conference on Disarmament, the composition of its regional groups and the lack of participation by civil society are also anachronistic factors. However, the greatest obstacle responsible for stymying the work of the Conference has proved to be the consensus rule, which has been construed as the need for absolute unanimity, both on matter of substance and those of form. This interpretation has turned this rule into a right of veto for the 65 members of the Conference on Disarmament. When the veto is exercised, the majority of the international community is robbed of the opportunity to achieve a higher goal that is a priority on the global agenda. The veto has even been used to prevent the adoption of a programme of work. It would appear that a precondition exists that there must be agreement on substance before negotiations can start — forgetting that the Conference on Disarmament has a specific duty to negotiate.

The responsibility of ensuring that the Conference on Disarmament fulfils its mandate falls primarily on its members, but, in the last analysis, it is of concern to all States Members of the United Nations, which in 1978 designated it as the only multilateral forum for disarmament.

This provides us with an opportunity to take a step back and take a look, from the perspective of the General Assembly, at what is happening in Geneva. What we see from here and what is perceived by the 128 States that are not members of the Conference on Disarmament — that is to say, two thirds of the membership — is that over the past 15 years, at least one State member of the Conference on Disarmament was prepared to exercise the right to veto, thus preventing that forum from discharging the mandated entrusted to it by this very Assembly.

We note also that the repeated calls by the General Assembly on the Conference on Disarmament to begin its work have gone unheeded. If this state of affairs continues, it will be logical for the General Assembly to carefully consider this issue and adopt the measures necessary to rescind the prerogatives granted to a body that no longer complies with its wishes.

In 2005, Mexico, together with other countries, proposed that disarmament negotiations should commence in the General Assembly, in the hope that the Conference on Disarmament would adopt its programme of work and fulfil its mandate. Mexico remains prepared to encourage such a step or any other that would offer real possibilities for beginning multilateral negotiations on disarmament.

In conclusion, we trust that the General Assembly, at its upcoming session, will shoulder the responsibility falling to it in this respect.

Mr. Errázuriz (Chile) (*spoke in Spanish*): My delegation is grateful to the President of the General Assembly for having convened this debate and for his commitment to revitalizing the disarmament agenda. We also appreciate the interest of the Secretary-General in relaunching negotiations on disarmament and non-proliferation. The five-point plan and the high-level meeting convened in 2010 are proof of a high degree of political responsibility regarding a matter that is of vital importance for the multilateral system to work effectively and thereby contribute to collective security, development, peace and international security.

Chile aligns itself with the statements made by the Permanent Representative of Egypt on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement, the Permanent Representative of Australia on behalf of the 10 countries involved in the non-proliferation and disarmament initiative, and by the Permanent Representative of the Netherlands on behalf of the 41 countries concerned.

First and foremost, Chile wishes to reaffirm its commitment to multilateralism in general and in the matter of disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation in particular. We appreciate the multilateral disarmament and security institutions that protect both our individual security interests and those of the international community as a whole.

It is pointless to go on analyzing the reasons for the stalemate in the Conference on Disarmament and the dysfunction in the disarmament machinery when what the international community wants is concrete actions and stronger standards and instruments on disarmament and arms limitation. That is a sphere in which we have seen progress and a favourable climate that should permeate the Conference on Disarmament.

After more than 10 unproductive years, the Conference on Disarmament has arrived at a restricted situation that is unsustainable. A revitalization process directed at reaching an agreement allowing it to resume its negotiation function requires a broad political commitment that could take shape in a framework in which countries feel they have an effective forum for participating in creating a safer world and protecting their own legitimate national interests.

Self-diagnosis and debates on the rules of procedure must give way to measures that make it possible to reanimate the Conference in short order or to seek alternatives that could fully serve the interests of the international community. We suggest analyzing document CD/1931, submitted by Colombia, which gives a thorough description of the perceptions, interests and limitations of the Conference on Disarmament.

Revitalizing the Conference requires revising some of its central aspects, such as its composition, procedures and consensus rule. Although we believe in retaining that rule as a way of attaining a broad base on matters in which the security of States is at stake, it should not be abused to the point of paralyzing the Conference on merely procedural matters. The composition of the regional groups is another point that must be analyzed. In the twenty-first century the Conference on Disarmament must not turn its back on civil society. It should build bridges with civil society and have greater interaction with it. All these political issues must be part of a negotiating package.

Chile has a broad and flexible attitude about options that would make possible progress in multilateral negotiations on disarmament and non-proliferation. We do not intend to replace the Conference on Disarmament. We prefer to work inside it, as the outstanding negotiating forum in the field. Still, we must be clear that we are open to examining alternatives.

The fact that we are meeting here in New York may lead us to establish the right of the General Assembly to take actions on matters of disarmament and non-proliferation, which have a real, direct impact on the role and mandate of the Conference on Disarmament. If the status quo continues, it will be difficult to challenge the legitimacy of such a step.

The subsidiary bodies of the United Nations system are not ends in themselves. They are merely means to satisfy and channel the political aspirations and needs of the international community. Disarmament is a common global good. That is not true of the Conference on Disarmament or other mechanisms of the so-called disarmament machinery that have their origin in the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament, more than 30 years ago, and that can be changed, as has happened with other bodies. A fourth special session on disarmament could be the suitable forum in which to introduce reforms that would give the international community the tools required by our present circumstances.

We should ask ourselves whether the lack of progress in disarmament negotiations is structurally linked to the Conference on Disarmament, a problem specific to that body, or whether it derives from the strategic and political interests of major players that probably would affect any disarmament forum. If the latter is the case, progress will be achieved only through determined commitment and political will on the part of those players and the international community as a whole.

Ms. Štiglic (Slovenia): Allow me first to thank the President of the General Assembly, and the Secretary-General for his personal initiative in organizing today's timely debate under agenda item 162, "Follow-up to the high-level meeting held on 24 September 2010: Revitalizing the work of the Conference on Disarmament and taking forward multilateral disarmament negotiations". I would like to welcome the presence of Ms. Pellicer, who presides in the Secretary-General's Advisory Board on

Disarmament, whose opinion we await with great anticipation and which we believe will significantly support our work. I would also like to thank Mr. Tokayev, the Secretary-General of the Conference on Disarmament, for his remarks.

Before I start, I would like to align Slovenia with the statements made by the European Union, by Portugal on behalf of the informal group of observer States to the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva and by the Netherlands on behalf of the countries supporting the initiative on follow-up to the high-level meeting that took place on 24 September 2010.

I wish to make three points regarding today's discussion.

First, we believe that it is now high time for concrete follow-up decisions that should follow the high-level meeting that took place here last September. We hope that after today's meeting we will know more about how to proceed in the next General Assembly session. We equally hope that the Secretary-General's Advisory Board will be useful and will offer the Secretary-General and Member States instrumental advice in this regard.

Secondly, Slovenia believes that the current stalemate in global multilateral disarmament negotiations clearly demonstrates how urgently we need a comprehensive reform of the existing international disarmament machinery. The Geneva-based Conference on Disarmament, established in 1979, needs to be adapted to the realities of the contemporary world of the twenty-first century. Above all, it should open its doors to all interested countries that want to contribute to international peace and security. International peace and security is important for all countries in the world, not only for the group of current members of the Conference on Disarmament. We firmly believe that new members would enrich the work of the Conference and help it to overcome the present impasse.

Let me use this opportunity to reiterate our longstanding view that the Conference should commence negotiations on a fissile material cut-off treaty (FMCT) without any further delay. We are convinced that an FMCT would effectively complement the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty and would guide us further on our way towards a world without nuclear weapons.

Thirdly, the reinvigoration of the Conference on Disarmament is one of the first steps on the way to reforming the international disarmament machinery. In this regard, we should also reconsider the role of the United Nations Disarmament Commission, which this year again failed to produce any significant results. The reform should be comprehensive and effective and should also redefine the role of the First Committee.

Finally, Slovenia welcomes the efforts of the Secretary-General and of many countries to move the disarmament process forward. We expect that in the autumn we will start serious discussions on concrete proposals on how to implement the process that we started in the high-level meeting last year. Time is of the essence, and let me invite all States to join us in our efforts to unblock international disarmament negotiations and start effective reform of the international disarmament machinery that will finally deliver results and take us forward to our ultimate goal — a world without nuclear weapons.

Mr. Abdullah (Malaysia): Let me first express our appreciation to the Secretary-General for his continuous efforts in promoting a world free of nuclear weapons.

I align my delegation with the statement made by Egypt at the 113th meeting on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement. We also would like to thank the Netherlands for its statement delivered at the same meeting on behalf of 41 States, which we view as highly pertinent to the purposes of this debate.

The Conference on Disarmament, the United Nations Disarmament Commission, the First Committee of the General Assembly and the review process of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty constitute the multilateral platform for States to work collectively to achieve our shared goal of general and complete disarmament under effective international control. For this reason, among others, the Conference in particular cannot forever remain deadlocked. We need to set the right priorities and concentrate all efforts on achieving them.

Moving forward, my delegation wishes to reiterate the unanimous conclusion of the International Court of Justice that there exists an obligation to pursue in good faith, and to bring to conclusion, negotiations leading to nuclear disarmament in all its aspects, under strict and effective international control. We therefore wish to underscore that emphasis should

be given to the total elimination of nuclear weapons through the adoption of a nuclear weapons convention. It is imperative that the Conference on Disarmament commence its substantive work at the earliest opportunity, to enable further progress in the field of disarmament and non-proliferation.

It is also worth recalling that the Conference on Disarmament, the Disarmament Commission and the First Committee were the outcomes of the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament. We are therefore of the view that these three organs are all accountable to the Assembly. In this connection, we support the convening of a fourth special session of the Assembly devoted to disarmament, which could be instrumental in moving forward the disarmament agenda.

Another alternative that could also be considered is the possibility of reviewing the effectiveness of each entity through an eminent persons group, which would come up with recommendations for ways to revitalize the United Nations disarmament machinery. Malaysia mentioned this in its statement at the high-level meeting on revitalizing the work of the Conference on Disarmament held last year. It was also mentioned in the recommendation section of the recent report of the Advisory Board on Disarmament Matters. Malaysia is ready to explore any other feasible ideas put forward.

Transparency and complete inclusiveness should be the guiding principles of the Conference on Disarmament. We support expansion of the Conference and agree that further opportunity should be given to civil society to follow Conference proceedings in a meaningful manner.

Lastly, we cannot stress enough that genuine and strong political will exhibited by States in a tangible manner is absolutely vital to taking forward multilateral disarmament negotiations at the Conference on Disarmament and other organs of the United Nations. Malaysia is ready to work closely with other delegations to undertake this joint endeavour.

Mr. Fernández-Arias Minuesa (Spain) (*spoke in Spanish*): Spain aligns itself with the statement made at the 113th meeting on behalf of the European Union.

A little less than a year ago, last 24 September, a high-level meeting was held under the auspices of the Secretary-General with the goal of evaluating the situation of the Conference on Disarmament and the reasons for its stalemate. That exercise led to a thorough analysis of the present situation, with wide participation on the part of ministers and other high-level representatives, as was recognized in resolution 65/93. This also highlights the commendably firm commitment of the Secretary-General, who has made revitalizing the disarmament machinery one of his priorities.

Regrettably, we must conclude that the paralysis of the Conference on Disarmament has continued throughout 2011, with no sign of any resolution. The efforts and appeals to lift this negotiating body out of its stalemate have to date been fruitless.

It would be tempting to say that since we have made no progress, we are in the same place we were in a year ago. A year ago, however, we could feel confident that some positive momentum rising from a series of good news in the area of disarmament and non-proliferation — such as the signing of the New START Treaty, the Washington summit on nuclear security and the consensus for a plan of action based on the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) Review Conference — would have a contagious effect on the Conference on Disarmament. However, that hope has still not materialized, and while the disarmament agenda is making progress in other forums, the Conference in Geneva continues to waste its means, efforts and energy for yet another year, without taking even the first step towards consensus in the form of adopting a programme of work — something it painstakingly achieved in 2009.

In recent years it has become commonplace to say that the Conference on Disarmament works but does not produce. Its abundant — perhaps excessive — schedule of meetings provides evidence of its labours. We have to wonder, however, if those labours, as arduous as they are unproductive, have any reason to be other than as a ritual for its own sake, considering that they are unable to unblock the negotiations.

It is indeed true that despite its inaction on negotiations, during the Conference's current session — and thanks to the laudable efforts of the Canadian, Chilean, Chinese and Colombian presidencies — countless formulas, initiatives and proposals have been brought up, many of which are very sound, in our view. It is not ideas that are lacking but rather sufficient consensus to bring them to fruition.

Given this critical convergence, which places us between the clamour from the international community and civil society for progress on disarmament and an ineffective or at any rate stalled disarmament machinery, what should be done?

The ideal would be progress within the framework of the Conference on Disarmament, which in the past has shown itself to be an effective forum for international negotiation for such important achievements as the Biological Weapons Convention, the Chemical Weapons Convention, the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty.

Spain is committed to this course, as it demonstrated on 16 June, when, together with Germany, the Netherlands, Mexico, Sweden, Turkey, Bulgaria and Romania, it introduced document CD/1910, a joint discussion paper designed to stimulate debate on fissile material in the Conference on Disarmament.

One can continue bet on revitalizing the Conference on Disarmament, but it would be a mistake to do so with infinite patience. Our task is too important and urgent to leave it to a single forum that for 14 years has shown itself incapable of fulfilling its mission. In other words, if the debate is couched in terms either of making progress in the field of disarmament and non-proliferation or of betting on the Conference on Disarmament, there can be only one response from all of us here, and it must be heard once and for all in a clear and unanimous manner.

But let us not anticipate events. For the time being, this meeting presents a new opportunity for exploring the causes of and possible solutions to the paralysis of the Conference on Disarmament, and we must not waste it. In that regard, we would like to join in the concrete proposals offered by the European Union. In particular, we call attention to the following.

First, we call on the Conference on Disarmament, the First Commission and the Disarmament Commission to review their working methods and duly examine the issue in their reports to the General Assembly, while requesting that the Assembly maintain its interest in this issue and its follow-up. Secondly, we call on States possessing nuclear weapons to declare and maintain a moratorium on the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons and other explosive nuclear devices. Lastly, we call on the member States of the Conference to initiate negotiations for a fissile material cut-off treaty without delay, and to begin working on the other items on the agenda.

We must be both bold and realistic as we explore and promote concrete proposals for the Conference on Disarmament, always keeping in mind that, as Alexis de Tocqueville said, institutions that we are accustomed to calling necessary are sometimes only institutions to which we have become accustomed.

Mr. Mahmood (Bangladesh): May I convey to you, Sir, the appreciation of the delegation of Bangladesh for scheduling this important plenary meeting as a follow-up to the High-level Meeting on Revitalizing the Work of the Conference on Disarmament and Taking forward Multilateral Disarmament Negotiations, held on 24 September 2010.

I would like to associate myself with the statement delivered by the representative of Egypt on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement. In addition, I would like to dwell on certain core elements from our national perspective.

The agreement between the United States of America and the Russian Federation on arms reduction is an important positive step after years of sluggishness in disarmament talks. This is a step in the right direction, but it is decidedly insufficient for freeing the planet from the curse of nuclear weapons. We hope that States parties will seize the moment at this plenary meeting, and that the meeting provides guidance to all of us, including the States that have yet to become parties to the relevant instruments, in achieving the total elimination of nuclear weapons.

Bangladesh is a democratic, secular and inclusive society. My country, with its impeccable disarmament and non-proliferation record, is committed to the pursuit of universal adherence to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT). Bangladesh has unconditionally opted to remain non-nuclear by choice. We were the first annex 2 country from South Asia to ratify the CTBT. We have also concluded a safeguards agreement with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), including the additional protocols.

Bangladesh is constitutionally committed to achieving general and complete disarmament. As a

demonstration of that commitment, the Parliament of Bangladesh has also adopted a resolution supporting the 2010 NPT Review Conference. The resolution, inter alia, emphasized the need to implement all three pillars of the NPT, namely, nuclear disarmament, nuclear non-proliferation and the peaceful uses of nuclear energy. It has also reiterated its support for article IV of the NPT, which guarantees the inalienable rights of all States parties to the NPT to develop research, production and use of nuclear energy for peaceful purposes without discrimination and in conformity with articles I and II of the Treaty, under the IAEA safeguards and verification mechanism. The Bangladesh Parliament, in its unanimous opinion, also expressed the belief that any use of nuclear weapons would constitute an international crime, including a crime against humanity, a crime against peace, a war crime and genocide. The Government of Bangladesh fully supports this parliamentary resolution.

Bangladesh steadfastly supports a multilateral approach to nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament. We believe that the Conference on Disarmament is the sole multilateral negotiating body on disarmament. We also support the work of the Disarmament Commission, which is the sole specialized, deliberative body within the United Nations multilateral disarmament machinery.

We believe that weapons of mass destruction pose the gravest threat to humankind. We continue to believe that only the total elimination of nuclear weapons can provide a guarantee against the use or threat of use of such weapons and against the danger of such weapons falling into the hands of terrorists.

Bangladesh is convinced that, in addition to electricity generation, the peaceful uses of nuclear technology within the IAEA safeguards and verification regime may help tackle some old as well as contemporary development challenges that we confront, including hunger, disease, natural resource management and climate change. It is disconcerting to note that undue restrictions on exports of material, equipment and technology for peaceful purposes to developing non-nuclear-weapon countries continue to persist through measures incompatible with the provisions of the Treaty. These barriers need to be removed.

It is a matter of concern that the nuclear-weapon States are not only adding more precision capability to the existing stockpiles of nuclear weapons, but are also developing new types of weaponry. We stress that non-nuclear States parties to the NPT have a legitimate right to receive unconditional assurances from the nuclear-weapon States that the latter will not use or threaten to use nuclear weapons against them.

Bangladesh also views the disarmament and non-proliferation agenda from a development perspective. Our conscience cannot justify an expenditure of about $1.5 trillion a year on armaments when developing countries, particularly least developed countries like Bangladesh, are struggling to achieve the Millennium Development Goals. The full implementation of the disarmament and non-proliferation agenda, including nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation, is critical to achieve this goal.

Let me reiterate that, notwithstanding everything to which I have referred, we have not lost faith in ourselves. While we acknowledge that our journey towards a nuclear-weapon-free world will not be easy, we do not believe that difficulties should deter us from beginning our quest for a nuclear-weapon-free world, for ourselves and for our children. We must leave behind a planet habitable for future generations. Let us resolve to make a difference today.

Mr. Taalas (Finland): I would like thank you, Sir, for convening this plenary meeting on this pressing topic.

Finland aligns itself with the statements made on behalf of the European Union and on behalf of a group of like-minded countries delivered by the Netherlands.

Almost a year has passed since the High-level Meeting in New York last September, and we have not seen any progress. The reasons for this situation are well-known. The decade-long hiatus in the Conference on Disarmament negotiations threatens to unravel the system of multilateral disarmament negotiations. The United Nations disarmament machinery is in jeopardy. The situation requires political re-engagement and fresh thinking by all Member States. Business as usual is not an option. What we need most urgently is strong political will to restart multilateral disarmament negotiations. We hope this meeting will serve to crystallize this will.

We need to begin negotiations on a fissile material cut-off treaty in the Conference on

Disarmament without delay. It would take us a step closer to our goal of a world without nuclear weapons and would be essential for our non-proliferation efforts. A fissile material cut-off treaty would contribute to implementing all three pillars of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons.

The Conference on Disarmament must embrace the momentum for nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation as manifested in the New START Treaty and at the Nuclear Security Summit. Finland urges all Member States to work towards complete nuclear disarmament through concrete actions.

There are also some practical steps we can take in order to revitalize the work in the United Nations disarmament machinery.

First, we should review the working methods of the Conference on Disarmament, the First Committee and the Disarmament Commission. We need more substantial discussion and search for common ground, and less procedure.

Secondly, multilateral negotiations demand the participation of all relevant players. Reviewing the Conference on Disarmament's membership base is warranted in order to ensure its inclusiveness.

Thirdly, we need fresh ideas and a better connection to the realities outside United Nations meeting rooms. We should strengthen the voice of civil society and academia and find ways to make better use of their valuable contribution in our work.

We are committed to doing our utmost to advance multilateral disarmament negotiations during Finland's chairmanship of the First Committee during the sixty-sixth session of the General Assembly. We hope that, with the political re-engagement of all Member States, we can together take the revitalization agenda forward.

Mr. Tladi (South Africa): South Africa is thankful for this opportunity to have an open and honest discussion about the multilateral disarmament agenda and, in particular, for the opportunity to examine the progress that has been made since the adoption of resolution 65/93 on revitalizing the work of the Conference on Disarmament and taking forward multilateral disarmament negotiations.

My delegation aligns itself with the statements delivered by the representative of Egypt, who spoke on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement, and by the representative of the Netherlands, who spoke on behalf of a group of States from various regions around the world.

One of the outcomes of the first special session on the General Assembly devoted to disarmament (SSOD-I) was to recognize the need for a single multilateral disarmament negotiating forum of limited size taking decisions on the basis of consensus — what we know today as the Conference on Disarmament. The past achievements of the Conference and its predecessor entities have illustrated the role that this body can play in the negotiation of key multilateral disarmament instruments. It is therefore regrettable that this institution has for many years now failed to fulfil its basic mandate. As a result of the continuing deadlock, many have understandably started to question the Conference's relevance and continued value in the pursuit of disarmament goals, especially since the dawn of the new international security environment after the end of the Cold War.

Another decision of SSOD-I was the establishment of the Disarmament Commission as a deliberative body on disarmament and a subsidiary organ of the General Assembly. Unfortunately, this body is also not fulfilling its mandate and has again this year failed to produce any concrete recommendations.

Nuclear disarmament remains our highest priority, which is a priority shared by all members of the Non-Aligned Movement, the Group of 21 and the vast majority of States Members of the Conference on Disarmament and the United Nations across all regions. Not only do we share concerns about the continued vertical and horizontal proliferation of nuclear weapons, but we believe that the very existence of nuclear weapons contributes to global insecurity.

Furthermore, the catastrophic humanitarian consequences that would result from the use of nuclear weapons clearly represent a serious risk to humankind. While these weapons exist, none of us will truly be secure. Only the complete elimination of all nuclear weapons and the assurance that they will never be produced again can provide the necessary guarantees against their use. It is for this reason that South Africa has consistently argued for a systematic and progressive approach towards achieving our goal of a world free from nuclear weapons. We believe that continuous and irreversible progress in nuclear

disarmament and other related nuclear arms control measures remains fundamental to the promotion of nuclear non-proliferation.

The lack of real progress towards nuclear disarmament has weakened the global non-proliferation regime. Although nuclear disarmament was the subject of the first resolution adopted by the General Assembly in 1946 (resolution 1 (I)), it has been the first item on the agenda of the Conference on Disarmament since the Conference's inception. Despite the ongoing demand by the overwhelming majority of members of the Conference for the establishment of a subsidiary body to deal with nuclear disarmament alone, that has not materialized. That is particularly disconcerting given that all States parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons have committed to this goal in the Action Plan adopted by the 2010 NPT Review Conference. My delegation therefore reiterates its call to the Conference on Disarmament to immediately establish a subsidiary body to deal with nuclear disarmament.

As part of the systematic and progressive approach to nuclear disarmament, my delegation also supports the commencement of negotiations on a treaty that would ban the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons and other nuclear explosive devices and that would fulfil both non-proliferation and disarmament objectives. My delegation does not subscribe to the view that a fissile material treaty is the only item ripe for negotiations. Given the nature of the Conference on Disarmament as a negotiating forum, we believe that the Conference is able to negotiate on any issue on its agenda, although we acknowledge that the finalization of any internationally legally binging arrangements in the near future may be more likely on some issues than on others.

While we may not all agree on the issues that are either more or less ripe for the conclusion of an agreement, that should not prevent us from dealing substantively with the issues on the multilateral disarmament agenda. The question that confronts us today is whether the Conference on Disarmament is able to live up to our expectations or whether alternative options should be explored for taking forward multilateral disarmament negotiations in an effort to revitalize the work that should have been undertaken by this body.

We acknowledge that the Conference on Disarmament came close to resuming its work in 2009 when it adopted a programme of work. While CD/1864 was not a perfect document, it was our hope that it would have led to a new phase in the Conference's recent history that would have allowed us to work together to build a better, more secure future. Unfortunately, neither CD/1864 nor any other formula on mandates for subsidiary bodies on items on our agenda has led to a resumption of substantive work.

While some would ascribe the lack of concrete results in the Conference on Disarmament to its rules of procedure, my delegation believes that the resistance by some to pursue in good faith and bring to a conclusion negotiations leading to nuclear disarmament in all its aspects, under strict and effective international control, is a larger obstacle faced by the international community.

Many of us would like to see the Conference on Disarmament resume its rightful place. However, its continued failure to engage in substantive work over the past 15 years does not allow us to be indifferent to the ongoing challenges. If the Conference continues to fail in executing its mandate, there would be no reason not to consider other options in taking forward the important work that this body has been entrusted with.

In conclusion, South Africa remains committed to a rules-based international system. We will therefore pursue any further actions that may be required with a view to strengthening multilateral governance in the field of disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control. In addition, we will examine any options for taking forward multilateral disarmament negotiations with the aim of achieving our goal of a world free of nuclear weapons.

The Acting President: We have heard the last speaker for this meeting. We shall hear the remaining speakers tomorrow, 29 July, at 11 a.m. in the Hall. At that meeting, the Assembly will also take up agenda item 13 to continue its discussion on the human right to water and sanitation.

Before concluding this meeting, a representative has requested to exercise the right of reply. May I remind Member States that statements in exercise of the right of reply are limited to 10 minutes for the first intervention and to 5 minutes for the second intervention and should be made by delegations from their seats.

I now give the floor to the representative of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

Mr. Ri Tong Il (Democratic People's Republic of Korea): Let me exercise the right of reply and at the same time make some comments on the remarks made by the representative of Canada, who raised a question about the Democratic People's Republic of Korea presidency of the Conference on Disarmament.

As far as the Democratic People's Republic of Korea presidency of the Conference is concerned, it is an exercise of the sovereign right of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, as a State Member of the United Nations, to be President of the Conference on Disarmament. Under the Conference on Disarmament's rules of procedure, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea is obligated to serve as President of the Conference on Disarmament.

In addition, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea is and has been a State Member of the United Nations. Article 2, paragraph of 1, of the Charter of the United Nations stipulates that the United Nations is based on the principle of respect for the sovereign equality of all Members States. As far as this legal issue is concerned, we consider the remarks by the representative of Canada to be in serious violation of the United Nations Charter.

Secondly, the remarks of the representative of Canada were in violation of the practice in international forums. This would not be the first time that the Canadian delegation has boycotted an international forum. The first time was in 2001, when there was an anti-racism conference in Durban. Canada was the only country that boycotted that meeting. It set a very disgraceful precedent in the practice of international multilateralism.

That was not the only instance of a Canadian boycott. It occurred again in other meetings, including here at the General Assembly while one country's president was delivering a speech — right in this forum. This is the third time that a Canadian representative has taken such action in the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva. The Democratic People's Republic of Korea therefore strongly condemns this behaviour by the Canadian representative.

Thirdly, this is a demonstration of Cold-War-era psychology and mentality. Actually, this is now the post-Cold-War period. It was only during the time of the Cold War that we witnessed such confrontational behaviour by countries. The post-Cold-War period is a time for dialogue and confidence-building. One can see this in every region, including in the Asian region. Canada and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea participate as members of the Regional Forum of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations. The overall spirit is one of confidence-building and dialogue. But now, rather than adopting that behaviour of dialogue and reconciliation, Canada has taken the road to confrontation. The Canadian representative is the only one adopting that kind of behaviour.

The meeting rose at 6.05 p.m.